RHODE ISLAND'S DEFINITION OF PERSISTENTLY LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS AND METHOD FOR IDENTIFYING SCHOOLS

Rhode Island's definition of "persistently lowest-achieving schools" is as follows:

Based on the definition, Rhode Island adhered to the federal guidance to analyze its data comprehensively to identify schools in the state.

Using a combination of four elements described in the next section, Rhode Island was able to identify its lowest-performing schools based on a combination of school-wide performance in reading and mathematics, NCLB classification, student growth or graduation rates, and school-wide improvement. Rhode Island identified a subset of Title I schools in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring to identify Tier I; and a subset of Title I secondary schools that are eligible for but do not receive Title I funds for Tier II. Rhode Island is also using the waiver authority granted to it by the US Department of Education to include Title I-served secondary schools in its pool for identification of Tier II schools. Rhode Island defines secondary schools as any middle or high school. In applying the federal definition for persistently lowest-achieving schools, Rhode Island did not have any high schools with a graduation rate that was less than 60% over the past two years.

For both Tiers I and II, 5% of the number of schools was less than five, and Rhode Island therefore identified five schools. However, two elementary schools ranked as five and six had the exact number of points. Therefore, we have six schools identified in Tier I.

Element 1: *School-wide Performance in Reading and Mathematics*

Element 1 is based on school-wide student performance, (all students) in mathematics and reading for the 2008-09 school year. Element 1 identifies those schools with reading and math proficiency rates significantly below respective state-wide average performance. This element uses one and two standard deviation units below the state average to determine each school's score points as follows:

8 points were assigned when overall school performance was more than two standard deviations below the state average. Schools more than two standard deviations below in math had between 0% and 6.6% proficient students and in reading between 0% and 34.4% proficient.

4 points were assigned when overall school performance was between one and two standard deviations below the state average. These schools' proficiency rates in math ranged between 6.6% and 29.5% and in reading between 34.4% and 51.2% proficient.

0 points were assigned when overall school performance was less than one standard deviation below the state average.

Element 2: *NCLB Classification*

Element 2 identifies schools based on 2008-09 AYP classifications. Schools were assigned score points as follows:

2 points were assigned to schools under restructuring

1 point was assigned when schools failed to meet AYP for two or more consecutive years

0 points were assigned when schools either met AYP or failed to meet AYP for less than two consecutive years

Element 3: *Student Growth or Graduation*

Element 3 is based on a *Student Growth Percentile* to measure individual student progress for elementary and middle schools. For high schools, graduation rates were used in lieu of student growth percentiles because growth measures were not possible.[1] Student growth and graduation rates are based on data from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years for all students. This element identifies those schools whose median percentile growth is typical or lower than the state average.

Elementary and middle schools were assigned the following score points in reading and math:

2 points were assigned when median growth was below the 40th percentile.

1 point was assigned when median growth was between the 40th and 60th percentiles.

0 points were assigned when median growth was above the 60th percentile or when the school proficiency rates for math or reading were above state averages of 52% and 68% respectively.

Rhode Island was able to use its two most recent years of graduation results to contribute to this element. This is because it moved to the NGA cohort formula and was able to calculate this rate for the first time with the graduating class of 2007. Rhode Island has no Title I eligible high school with a graduation rate below 60%. High schools were assigned the following score points based on 2007-08 graduation rates:

[1] This is because only one year of grade 11 data are available, which prevents researchers from obtaining the necessary consecutive-year data to determine student growth percentiles.

2 points were assigned when the school's graduation rate was more than one standard deviation below the overall state average of 73.9%. Schools more than one standard deviation below the state average had graduation rates that ranged from 0% to 57.4%

1 point was assigned when the school's graduation rate was between the overall state average and one standard deviation.

0 points were assigned when the school's graduation rate was higher than the overall state average or when the school proficiency rates for math or reading were above state averages of 52% and 68% respectively.

Element 4: *School-wide Improvement in Reading and Mathematics*

Element 4 is based on differences in school-wide student performance for all students in mathematics and reading between the 2005-06[2] and the 2008-09 school years. Element 4 identifies those schools with improvement in reading and math proficiency rates significantly below respective state-wide average improvement. This element uses one and two standard deviation units below the state average improvement[3] (Math = 6.6, Reading = 8.6) to determine each school's score points as follows:

2 points were assigned when the difference in school performance from 2005-06 to 2008-09 was more than two standard deviations below the state average. Schools more than two standard deviations below in math had a decrease in performance greater than 8.7 percentage points and in reading had a decrease in performance greater than 8.1.

1 point was assigned when the difference in school performance from 2005-06 to 2008-09 was between one and two standard deviations below the state average. These schools' decrease in performance in math ranged between 1.1 and 8.7 percentage points and in reading between 0 and 8.1 percentage points.

0 points were assigned when the difference in school performance from 2005-06 to 2008-09 was less than one standard deviation below the state average or when the school proficiency rates for math or reading were above state averages of 52% and 68% respectively.

[2] Test results for high schools were not available for the 2005-06 school year. For high schools, therefore, results from 2007-08 were used in lieu of the 2005-06 results.

[3] State average improvement was determined by calculating the difference between 2005-06 and 2008-09 school-wide percent proficient in math and reading.